



Prof. Justine Namaalwa, the Programme Director, Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, Makerere University.
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How did the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program journey start?

Phase One of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program (2013-2023)

According to the Program Director, Prof. Justine Namaalwa, in 2013, Makerere University entered into a transformative partnership with the Mastercard Foundation to nurture the next generation of leaders in Africa. This initiative is designed to empower young people to drive positive change in their lives, their communities, and across the continent. The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program places strong emphasis on enabling young people to shape new narratives and pursue meaningful aspirations.

Through this collaboration, Makerere University has successfully implemented two phases of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program. The first phase of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program was implemented from 2013 to 2023. Under this phase, 1,032 Mastercard Foundation Scholars were recruited and educated at Makerere University, of which 974 graduated and are contributing in various capacities within their communities.

Phase Two of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program (2023-2034)

In December 2023, the partnership was renewed, and the second phase of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is currently being implemented at Makerere University and will run through 2034. Building on the first phase, the University is committed to fostering inclusion and ensuring equitable access in this phase. To support this goal, specific scholarship quotas have been established for the following groups: Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (25 Percent of the Scholarships), Young People Living in Ref-

ugee-Hosting Communities (5 Percent of the Scholarships), Young People from Underrepresented Ethnic Groups in Uganda (5 Percent of the Scholarships), Young People Living with Disabilities (25 Percent of the Scholarships), International Students (10 Percent of the Scholarships) as well as Other Ugandan Nationals facing financial barriers to pursuing University Education (30 Percent of the Scholarships).

What has been the individual impact of Phase One graduates of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program?

To date, 974 Mastercard Foundation Scholars have graduated, proudly joining the Makerere University Alumni community.

Notably, 48 Percent of these Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Alumni have secured formal employment, demonstrating successful integration into the workforce. Furthermore, 18 Percent have launched their own businesses, not only creating jobs for themselves but also generating opportunities for other young people and driving local economic transformation.

The Mastercard Foundation Scholars Entrepreneurship Fund (SEF) supported 46 ventures by the end of 2025, proving that startups are indeed a crucial solution to combating youth unemployment.

In addition, 8 Percent of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Alumni are gaining essential work experience through internships facilitated by Transition Partners. Meanwhile, 5 Percent are pursuing further study in Master's, Postgraduate Diploma, and PhD Programs, reflecting their commitment to personal and professional growth.

In total, 72 Percent of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Pro-

gram Alumni are actively engaged in productive employment or entrepreneurship. This data clearly shows that investing in young people generates tangible economic and social returns.

The remaining 12 Percent are part of other young people in Uganda with university degrees who are facing challenges entering the world of work. These young people need support and systems to translate their career navigation journeys into meaningful engagements.

What has been the impact on the Communities?

Communities have greatly benefited from the Mastercard Foundation Scholars' Give Back initiatives, including the establishment of safe water sources, the construction of classrooms, and the planting of trees for environmental protection. These efforts reflect a commitment to empowering young people, positively impacting communities, and showcasing the potential of African universities for a sustainable future. Mastercard Foundation Scholars and Alumni implement one impact project each year on the Annual Day of Service, which allows them to showcase skills in organisation, mobilisation, and teamwork. Since 2014, Mastercard Foundation Scholars have implemented various community projects, as highlighted below.

• In 2023, Achukudu Primary School in Napak District made significant strides by constructing a two-room classroom block, complete with desks and benches, enhancing the learning environment for its students.

• In 2022, St. Katherine Primary School in Agago District contributed to its community by building a two-room classroom block alongside a

new pit latrine, improving facilities for both students and staff. In 2021, the Bulamwaki community in Iganga District saw valuable initiatives: a borehole was completed, and 56 jerrycans were donated to local women, promoting access to clean water.

• In 2020, Mastercard Foundation Scholars made a positive impact in the Kyangwali Refugee Settlement in Kikuube by providing essential COVID-19 protective materials, distributing sanitary pads, promoting tree planting, and offering career guidance to the community.

• In 2019, efforts at Salama School for the Blind in Mukono included planting trees and erecting a protective fence around the school, creating a safer and more welcoming environment for students. At Kibaale Primary School in Mityana, activities included general cleaning, tree planting, and the completion of a two-room teacher's residence.

• In 2018, Mastercard Foundation Scholars donated learning materials, nappies, and food items, supported feeding activities and carried out general cleaning at Kampala School for children living with disabilities in Kampala.

• In 2017, Mastercard Foundation Scholars constructed and renovated classroom blocks, dug a rubbish pit, and cleared a community well at Muzinda Primary School, and raised awareness on hygiene at Mbuya Gizaza Community in Nakawa. Additionally, they built a wooden classroom, renovated a latrine, cleaned the area, and planted trees at St. Charles Lwanga Primary School in Mukono.

• In 2015, Mastercard Foundation Scholars planted trees, undertook general cleaning, painted the buildings, and carried out electrical installations and repairs at Kireka School of Children with Special Needs in Kampala.

• In 2014, the first cohort of Mastercard Foundation Scholars dug a rubbish pit and a borehole trench, washed children's clothes, supported feeding activities, carried out general cleaning and compound slashing, and donated foodstuffs, nappies and laundry detergents to Mercy Child Care Centre in Wakiso. Giving back to the community has been, and continues to be, a core aspect of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, which fosters a culture of giving through individual and group initiatives. As Nelson Mandela rightly puts it:

"What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead". He also championed community service, noting that "we can all do more to reach out, take care, and serve the well-being of others"

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